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## A Look at Two Big Chicagoland Trail Projects: The Bloomingdale and Cal-Sag

by [John Greenfield](#)



Beth White on the Bloomingdale Trail's bridge over Humboldt Boulevard. Photo: John Greenfield

The Trust for Public Land's Beth White is a petite woman with a light southern accent, despite the fact that she's lived much of her life in here in Chicago. She hands me an oversized white hardhat and an orange safety vest, and we walk a couple of blocks from a construction office through the December gloom to the worksite for the Bloomingdale Trail, also known as The 606. This 2.7-mile elevated trail and linear park is slated to open in June. When it does, it's certain to become one of the Windy City's signature public spaces.

The Bloomingdale, which is being built on the old rail embankment of the same name, will stretch across four economically and culturally diverse neighborhoods on Chicago's Northwest Side, providing a gorgeous space for strolling, running, biking, and relaxing. Meanwhile, in the city's near south suburbs, the Cal-Sag Trail — a 26-mile multiuse path that will run almost entirely along the banks of the Cal-Sag Channel and the Calumet River — is partly completed and should be finished by 2018. Both greenways are great examples of how grassroots advocacy, efforts by municipalities and national nonprofits, and federal funding can combine to create projects with big economic, environmental, and health benefits.

White leads me up the embankment at a trailheads in Julia de Burgos Park, named after the late Puerto Rican nationalist and feminist poet who is a hero to many residents of Humboldt Park, the largely Latino community to the south. The railroad right-of-way runs about 16 feet above street level, and it averages only about 30 feet wide, but it will soon be home to colorful plantings and art installations. There's already a 14-foot-wide ribbon of concrete that will become the multiuse path. "The story of the 606 is a unique combination of passion and perseverance," White says. "Those things don't often go together."